



## Local News

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# Killing of Dahlonge man's dog by Royston policeman sparks controversy

By Wayne Ford

wayne.ford@onlineathens.com



Special/ Mark Jordan plays with his dog Booder in photo posted on his Facebook page. A hearing in Hart County will focus on whether a policeman was justified in killing Booder.

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The recent killing of a former U.S. Army Ranger's dog in Hart County by an off-duty Royston policeman will be the focus of a court hearing to determine if the policeman should face any criminal charges.

Hart County Magistrate Thomas Jordan, who is familiar with both men, is bringing in an impartial judge to hear the case, but the hearing, originally set for Monday, has been postponed to an undetermined date, Hart County authorities said Friday.

The dog's killing has sparked controversy and numerous comments on the dog owner's Facebook page. The policeman, Capt. Kenneth Roberts, filed a complaint with the Hart County Sheriff Office about what he perceived as threats posted against him on the page.

Sheriff's investigators have completed their investigation into the dog's killing, but could not decide whether Roberts should be charged.

"Even in this department, we're divided on if he had a right to shoot it," Sheriff Mike Cleveland said, adding that the judge will be asked to make a decision and "we'll go by it 100 percent."

The dog, named Booder, was killed May 28 off Mount Olive Road, Cleveland said. The dog's body was found the next day by Deborah Cleveland, no relation to the sheriff, who owns property near Roberts. Deborah Cleveland is a friend of the dog's owner, Mark Jordan of Dahlonge, who was visiting Hart County.

Deborah Cleveland had "an hysterical meltdown," upon finding Booder's body, Jordan said Thursday.

After finding Booder dead, Jordan said he began looking into who might have shot the dog. He called Royston police and spoke to Roberts.

"I said 'You shot my dog?' and he said 'Yes I did. He was on my property and I let my chihuahua out to pee.' And I said 'Thank you.' Click," said Jordan, a native of Royston, whose father once served as the town's police chief.

Jordan had a necropsy done by veterinarians in Athens, which showed the dog was shot in its side, Jordan said.

Royston Police Chief Donnie Boleman issued a statement after the shooting that Reynolds was not acting in his official capacity as an officer in the department, nor was he within his sworn jurisdiction. The case is being monitored, according to the chief.

Reynolds told Hart County investigators that he has had problems with dogs previously, Sheriff Cleveland said. Reynolds told investigators that he once had a pet dog attacked by other dogs and had chickens killed by a dog, according to Cleveland.

The judge will have to decide if these previous problems with other roaming dogs justified, or played a role in, Roberts' shooting of Jordan's dog, according to the sheriff.

The 59-year-old Jordan, commenting on Reynolds' complaint to the sheriff about the Facebook posts, said, "I told the sheriff if it's the truth, let him be bothered."

Jordan is an officer with the U.S. Mountain Rangers Association, a nonprofit group comprising former Army Rangers. Currently, Jordan operates an Internet counseling business.

A lot of supporters are expected at the hearing, according to Jordan.

"Kenneth Reynolds admitted to killing a Ranger's dog," he said.

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